PROFESSIONAL BRETHREN

BY GEORGE E. WALSH

CHAPTER IX.

THE indisposition of Mr. Goddard was of short duration, but the attacks became more frequent after my first visit to Dr. Squires, and I was occasionally called upon to carry notes for him which announced the breaking of engagements. There was nothing serious about his complaint except that he appeared weak and languid and unable or unwilling to attend to his social duties. He would spend the day at such times resting on the bed or couch either smoking gloomily or closing his eyes in a moody, dejected manner. He would lie in this way for hours without moving a muscle, but he was not asleep. The slightest noise would arouse him. He would merely open his eyes and ask, "What's the matter, William?" Then without even waiting for my reply he would close them wearily and relapse into his former languid condition.

By this time I was considerably attached to him, and it gave me as much anxiety as a relative to see him slowly going into a decline. The dread of the inherited disease intensified my feelings for the man. I had no faith in Dr. Squires, but I could offer no good substitute.

Left to myself a great deal, I took to reading the books which I found in Mr. Goddard's study. Many of these were medical treatises. Evidently the man had tried to make a study of his complaint and had collected all the literature possible upon the subject. These books were handsomely bound and copiously illustrated, but they were too technical for my limited understanding. Nevertheless I frequently found myself turning over their leaves and aimlessly reading paragraphs here and there.

One day I was engaged in this idle amusement when I happened to open the book at a chapter headed, "Poisons and Their Administration." I had not read many lines before I suddenly closed the book with a bang. An idea had occurred to me that fairly startled me. I was instantly positive that I had at last a clew to the sickness of my master and possibly the reason for Dr. Squires' mystery.

The doctor was slowly poisoning Mr. Goddard while pretending to help him to ward off an inherited disease.

This accounted for the peculiar languid condition of my master at certain intervals. After every dose of the insidious poison he was made weak and listless. Each attack helped to break down his naturally rugged constitution. It was merely a question of time before he would succumb to the poison instead of to any mythical disease.

Confronted by this thought, I was uncertain for a time just what to do. My first impulse was to go to my master and tell him my suspicions so he could be placed on his guard, but as my life has never been guided by impulse I soon dismissed this from mind.

Besides, I had nothing but my suspicions to reveal—not a single fact to prove anything. It was my duty to collect facts and then to confront the doctor with them and have him arrested. If he was determined to put my master out of the way and gain the hand and fortune of Miss Stetson, I was equally determined to thwart him in his little game. The stakes were high for him, and I knew that he would play a cunning, skillful hand, but as he would suspect no danger from me I had the advantage of working secretly and without much fear of discovery.

A professional burglar has a little of the detective spirit in him, and I soon found myself enjoying the scent with all the keenness of an experienced officer of the law. I had hunted detectives before, dogged their tracks, penetrated their disguises and followed up little clews that they left behind in their work, but all in the interest of crime. Now, however, I had turned reformer and was legitimately pursuing a criminal whose evil genius had been directed toward the destruction of one whom I had learned to like. It was no ordinary man that I had to fight against, and this gave more zest to my undertaking.

I discovered that my master had a night appointment with Dr. Squires about once a week. These appointments were irregular. Sometimes they were early in the week and, again, in the middle or the end. Evidently the doctor told him each time when to come again.

Upon reflection I was satisfied that there was a strange coincidence between these weekly night calls and my master's periodical attacks of languor and sickness. Almost every time after he had met the doctor at night he had been in bed a good part of the following day. This convinced me that the poison was administered at the doctor's office and was not intrusted to his patient.

This conclusion was reached one day when I was considerably dejected. I had been working up the case for nearly a week, and everything seemed to point to the fact that I had made a mistake in my reasoning. I could discover nothing to corroborate my suspicions. On that very day I had managed to secure the medicines my master was in the habit of taking, and, carrying them with me to the city, I had them analyzed by an expert chemist.

I was so confident that poison was contained in some of them that I was greatly surprised and perturbed when he told me that they were composed of harmless herbs and oils.

"You mean to say there is no poison in any of them?" I asked in astonishment.

"None whatever," he replied.

I did not believe he understood his case. This was the beginning of a career that I have studiously pursued ever since. I spent all my time in studying leprosy in its worst forms. I determined to find some remedy for it. I was limited in funds, but managed to get along by living near them. I could not exist in the same house with them. The thought of it nearly stifled me. But I could live near them and help them and in time perfect my discovery.

"My secret is already out, Miss Belle," he added after a pause. "I am devoting my time and life to the discovery of a positive cure for leprosy, that most dreaded of all diseases that ever scourged a wicked world. I am on the right track. In fact, I have about perfected it, so that I will be ready to announce the results to the world in a year. There is only one thing that bothers me. I am experimenting with this continually."

"Experimenting with whom?"

The words were so hollow and unnatural that I turned my eyes from the doctor's face to that of Miss Stetson. I was startled at the sight. Her face was livid—paler than that of any corpse. A look of horror shone from her eyes.

"Whom are you experimenting with, Dr. Squires?" she repeated in the same strange voice.

"With—why—my dear Miss Belle, have I divulged any family secret?" stammered the doctor. "Did you not know? I thought your father knew that you knew that"—

"That Charles had leprosy in his system—that he was a leper?" she said slowly.

"Your father knew it; his father knew it; Charles knew it when he met me. I understood that both families made no secret of it among themselves."

"No, I never knew what the disease was. Father never told me. Oh, can it be possible!"

She swayed in her saddle, and if the doctor had not caught her she would have fallen to the ground. I could hardly contain myself. The news nearly made me desperate. This accounted for everything. I was all wrong in my conclusions. The doctor was, after all, a good man, holding the secret of my master's life in his possession and trying hard to help him.

"You must let me give you some water, Miss Belle," the doctor said as he steadied her in the saddle. "Dismount a moment, and let me bathe your forehead."

"No, thank you, doctor. I will be all right in a moment. The suddenness of the news startled me."

"I know it, I know it, and I was a brute to tell you. I should have been more thoughtful. I shall never forgive myself. But, Miss Belle, believe me, I thought you knew it all. He should have told you."

"No, no; I am glad he didn't. How could I have been the same to him? How can I in the future?"

She shuddered and covered her face with her hands.

"Don't go on so, my dear Miss Belle," the doctor said in a low, winning voice. "There is hope for Charles yet. You forget that I am close upon the greatest discovery of the age. If it succeeds, Charles will be a new man, free from all taint of leprosy."

"But you could not eradicate the germs of the disease from his body; they might not show themselves in him, but in future generations they would come out."

"We can only hope for the best," he replied. "Who can tell what medicine may not accomplish? It has done wonders in the world already, and there are new worlds that it is conquering every day. We must look forward hopefully for results that it would be daring to predict now."

His words were intended to be encouraging, but she did not raise her head. From the slight shuddering of her delicate body I knew that she was sobbing.

"Do not yield to this weakness, Miss Belle," he added a moment later. "I tell you I will cure Charles. I can do it, and I will do it. If not for his sake, I will do it for yours."

A faint smile was visible through her tears as she looked at him and answered slowly:

"You are good, doctor, to sacrifice so much for either or both of us. Cure him by all means for his sake, not for mine. I could—no, I could never marry him; I would be afraid."

Again she covered her face and sobbed.

"Not if I cured him entirely?" he asked in a voice that had a curious tension to it. "Not if I assured you positively that the disease would never show itself while either of you lived?"

"No, no; I could not. It would be a sin, a crime. And yet I loved him so—I loved him, loved him!"

There was an awkward silence. The tears stood in my own eyes, but those of the doctor were dry and exultant. The confession, I knew, pleased him. These words from her lips would give him the clear field. He could honorably try to win her love. With Charles no longer a possible rival, what was there to prevent him from winning a beautiful bride and a princely fortune?

A few moments later they gathered up their reins and rode away. She was pale and beautiful; he was strong and robust—and exultant.

CHAPTER X.

BUT in the meantime, by mere accident, I discovered the secret of my master's fatal illness. It happened in this wise:

One afternoon when I was free for a few hours I strolled down the road toward Dr. Squires' house, habit generally drawing my footsteps in that direction. I was intent upon no particular purpose. I was merely walking along for the change. I frequently like to get off by myself and lie down in the woods or on the green grass and think. I am a great lover of nature. The birds and grass and flowers always appeal to me.

When alone in the woods, I will watch the birds by the hour, finding more enjoyment therein than in the company of man, or an army of busy ants will amuse me for half a day. I would not hurt one of these insects for anything or permit them to be disturbed in their work, and yet I have raised my hand against my fellow creatures, partly in self defense, it is true, to wound them or to take their lives if necessary.

On this particular afternoon I walked down the country highway for some distance, and then, attracted by the song of a wood thrush, I concealed myself in a thick clump of bushes and listened. The bird could not see me, and for a long time I lay there with my eyes half closed listening to the sweet music of the dainty singer. I do not know how long I remained there entranced by this private concert, but suddenly the bird hushed its song and flew away.

The noise that had frightened her came from the hoofs of two horses, which were cantering down the road at a rapid pace. I peered through the leaves of the bushes at the riders, and instantly all my gentle thoughts fled. The spell of the bird was no longer upon me. All my evil, crafty nature returned. The approaching riders were Dr. Squires and Miss Stetson.

Not a dozen paces from me a small stream bubbled up from an underground spring, and it was quite customary for riders to give their horses a drink at this place. A wooden trough had been sunk into the ground to receive the water and to form a drinking vessel for the beasts.

I was consequently not surprised when the two drew up their horses just in front of me and led them to the spring. The doctor dismounted and held the horses while they drank in the cooling draft. The two had been engaged in conversation, and I judged that she had been trying to extract his secret from him.

"I do not consider it an honor to keep your work so secret until you have completed your discovery," she was saying. "Then all the world will know it, and there is no special interest in it for me."

"But I have promised to tell it to you before any one else hears of it," the doctor answered.

"How long before—one day or one hour?"

There was a look of annoyance in his face at her reply.

"Any number of days beforehand you wish," he answered.

"Well, then, I wish to hear it now," she replied quickly, a bright smile reinforcing her words.

"Woman's impatience," he muttered. "It has caused half the trouble in the world."

"That is unkind. I don't like such reflections upon my sex."

"Nothing personal was intended, Miss Belle. I was merely uttering my reflections aloud."

"Well, please don't do so any more."

The doctor watched the horses drinking for a few moments and then, leaning against the saddle of his black steed, he said:

"Can you keep the secret if I divulge it to you?"

"Can I? I don't think that question is necessary."

"No, probably not. But I want your promise that you will never reveal it to anybody," he persisted.

"Well, you have it. I will never mention it until you give me permission."

"All right, then. I will tell you all. When I was a young man, I went to India as a surgeon in the English army. There I met so many lepers that my attention was called particularly to this disease. At first they disgusted and alarmed me. Their rotting fingers and toe joints, their running sores and their emaciated bodies were so loathsome that I could hardly stay in their presence, but in time I got used to them, as we do to everything. I even found myself pitying them and wondering if something couldn't be done to alleviate their sufferings and even to cure and stamp out the horrible disease. This was the beginning of a career that I have studiously pursued ever since. I spent all my time in studying leprosy in its worst forms. I determined to find some remedy for it. I was limited in funds, but managed to get along by living near them. I could not exist in the same house with them. The thought of it nearly stifled me. But I could live near them and help them and in time perfect my discovery.

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CHAPTER XI.

IT is not often that conflicting emotions trouble me. But on that afternoon as I walked back to Mr. Goddard's house I experienced the strangest contradiction of feelings. One moment I thought I would pursue the tragedy no further, but decamp immediately and let my master work out his own fate. After all, he was nothing to me, and he probably cared less for me than I did for him.

But the next moment I would have a revulsion of feelings. I would fall to pitying and sympathizing with both my master and Miss Stetson. Her love for him was genuine, and it must be a terrific blow to receive such intelligence. Was she not to be pitied more than Mr. Goddard? On the other hand he was conscious of the terrible doom that awaited him and was buoyed up only by the thought that possibly Dr. Squires could cure him. But now he could never gain his prize. Would she marry him even though pronounced cured?

What would be the result? Mr. Goddard would go away to some foreign country, and after grieving over him for a time Miss Stetson would yield to the importunities of Dr. Squires and marry him. I saw the climax of the tragedy, which, after all, would prove a tragedy only to my master, and it made me more faithful in my devotion to the unfortunate man. This decided me to stay by him until the time should come when my expectations would be fulfilled. Then I would return to my old ways. Meanwhile I was leading an honest life and making the money which I spent.

I had become quite efficient in my duties, and was trusted in many ways that never fell to the lot of my predecessor. I was more than butler—I was my master's confidential secretary in many respects. But there were some secrets that he would not reveal to me, and one was the dread disease which brought him so much care and sorrow.

After hearing the truth from Dr. Squires' own lips my attention was drawn more closely to Mr. Goddard's appearance. I watched his languid manners, his pale face and all the symptoms of disease that he showed during his periodical fits of sickness. More than this, I read up all the medical books about leprosy and then watched for the signs. To an excited imagination these were readily visible.

About this time Miss Stetson and the doctor took lunch at the house again, and my attention was called to the matter by an incident that greatly affected all of us. I had not seen Miss Stetson since that afternoon when I watched her from my hiding place at the wayside brook. She was paler than usual, and her manner was nervous and excited, especially when Charles was near her.

During the progress of the lunch I caught her studying the hands and face of her host on every occasion when his eyes were turned away from her. I could not at first understand the reason for this secret scrutiny, but it suddenly dawned upon me that she, too, had been reading on the subject and was looking for symptoms of the disease.

The doctor, as usual, was the life of the party and kept the conversation flowing freely from one to the other, never being at a loss for words. Nevertheless there was an uneasiness in his manner which seemed very unnatural. My master alone appeared to be perfectly at his ease and normal.

When the conversation lagged a moment, he suddenly rubbed the back of one of his hands with the palm of the other and said:

"Doctor, I think I must have run up against some poison ivy or sumac in the woods, for I'm sure that my hands and face are poisoned."

"Very likely, very likely," the doctor replied quickly, but with a little tremor in his voice. "There is a great deal of it around, and one of your nature would be very susceptible to it."

"My hands and face itch terribly, and blotches are breaking out on my face and forehead," Mr. Goddard continued.

I looked at Miss Stetson. She was staring at my master with horror written all over her face. The hand that held her fork trembled so that she had to put it down.

My master displayed his hands and added:

"See these red spots on the back of my hand. Are they not the result of poison? And over my eyes and forehead. They seem to be breaking out all over."

"Probably, Charles. I will investigate after lunch," the doctor said hurriedly, glancing toward Miss Stetson.

For the first time Mr. Goddard turned his eyes toward her. Feeling that she was attracting attention, her overwrought nerves could stand the strain no longer. She had been thinking as I had—that the brown spots were the first and earliest symptoms of leprosy. We both knew just enough to be carried away by any symptoms that resembled those which indicate the beginning of the dread disease.

"Belle, what is the matter? Are you ill?"

Mr. Goddard had hardly spoken these words before she dropped her hands and fainted. She would have fallen to the floor had I not caught her in time.

They deposited her on a couch and rubbed her hands and moistened her brow with water. She slowly recovered consciousness.

"You should not have mentioned being poisoned to her," the doctor said admonishingly to my master. "To one of her sensitive disposition the mere mention of a thing like that might cause her to faint."

"How careless and brutal of me," my master said in tones of repentance.

Then as she opened her eyes he knelt down by her side and, drawing one of her hands into his, said:

"Did I frighten you? I was a brute to do it. Look at me, Belle, and tell me that you forgive me."

For reply she turned her head away from him with a shudder and withdrew her hand from his clasp.

"What is it, dear?" he continued. "Do not draw away so. Tell me what it is that I have done. I will do anything to repair it. Speak, Belle."

"Leave me, please; leave me," she gasped. "I'm nervous and excited. Let me alone for a few minutes, and then I'll be better. But I must go home. Doctor, will you help me to get on my things?"

"Belle, you're not going to leave me like this," pleaded my master, approaching her again.

But she moved aside and said in a wavering voice:

"Let me go now, Charles. Maybe I can explain some day. I'm not myself now. Goodby!"

She did not extend her hand or offer to take his, but walked quickly out of the room.

Mr. Goddard stood quite still for some time, puzzled, perplexed, discouraged.

CHAPTER XII.

I WAS probably as much troubled as my master over this sad state of affairs. Miss Stetson's treatment hurt him more than he cared to confess. He seemed so perplexed and worried over the matter that I was several times on the point of telling him the reason for her sudden aversion for him.

There was but little doubt that he had noticed her dislike for him, but he was too proud and sensitive to mention the matter to any one. He was not a kind to speak of such personal questions even to Dr. Squires. For several days he remained away from the Stetson mansion, sending me over twice a day to inquire after Miss Stetson's health. I never saw her myself in any of these visits except the last. Then, instead of sending the message down to me by one of the servants, she called me up to her library.

The first thing I noticed about her was a peculiar careworn, suffering expression on her face. Under the dark eyes and around the lips there were delicate lines and tints which revealed more than words. She had suffered and was doomed to suffer more. Pathetic acceptance of her lot was apparent on every lineament of her face. She had evidently battled successfully with herself and had become resigned to her fate.

The room in which she ushered me was an old fashioned library where her father, the doctor, had gathered together many rare books and curios. The heavy woodwork, the dark paper and furnishings of the library cast a gloomy aspect over the sole occupant, and her white face gleamed out of the darkness like an old fashioned picture in a somber setting. In spite of her surroundings she was still beautiful—more beautiful it seemed to me than when fully exposed to broad daylight. Hers was a beauty that did not fade in light or shade.

"You come from Mr. Goddard with a message for me?" she said interrogatively as I entered the room.

"Yes, ma'am. He sent to inquire after your health," I replied, bowing respectfully.

"And he trusts you without a written message?" she continued.

"In this matter he does, for he considered you too ill to write, and he did not wish to put you to any unnecessary trouble."

"That is the true reason," she said quietly. "He is always very considerate to me."

"He is to every one," I added, wishing to show my devotion to him.

"Yes, yes; he is kind to all. He is a good man."

"I have never met a better, ma'am. If you will permit me to say it, and I've seen many kinds of men in the world. He is always thinking of other people, and if he does wrong I believe he has some good reason for it."

She looked at me as if she liked to hear me praise him, and when I stopped her expression seemed to say, "Go on, go on; it's music to me." But I knew my position and would say no more.

"Is Mr. Goddard well himself?" she asked when she found that I was mute.

"Yes. Except for an attack of poison, which has now gone away entirely, he has been very well."

She turned a shade paler and then flushed a little as she remembered that I had been present on the day when she fainted.

"Oh, yes; I remember he spoke of the poison the last time I saw him," she said in a moment, recovering her mental poise. "Have the spots or eruption entirely disappeared?"

"Entirely, ma'am. There are no signs of any left."

"I suppose Dr. Squires gave him something to cure them."

I knew that she was thinking of the doctor's cure for leprosy and that she imagined he had given my master something which would drive away the first symptoms of the disease, at least temporarily. But I knew differently, and I courted the opportunity to disabuse her mind of the mistake.

"No, ma'am; the doctor did nothing for my master," I answered. "I gave him something which cured the eruption."

"You? What did you know about the matter?"

"Not very much, ma'am, except that I had been poisoned once, and I remembered what helped me. I asked my master to let me get him a bottle."

"A bottle of what?"

"Witch hazel. It was one of my mother's cures for poison from ivy or sumac."

"And that cured him?"

Her face brightened wonderfully. She began to realize that she had been a victim of her imagination.

"Completely," I answered.

"Then it was not—nothing more serious than ordinary poison," she added, with a sigh of relief.

"Nothing, ma'am."

She gave expression to her relieved feelings in a short laugh. The sweetness of it made me turn my head to look at her. The beautiful face had suddenly lighted up so that it seemed almost divine in its expression. Here, I thought, was true love, and I willingly adored her for it.

"Pardon me," she said after a moment of silence. "I was thinking of something else which amused me. You must take a message to your master."

She walked toward the library table and drew pen and paper from a drawer. She hesitated a moment and then added:

"No; I won't write. I will send a verbal message by you. Charles has trusted you to bring one, and I will return it in the same way."

"Thank you, ma'am. I shall endeavor to prove worthy of the trust."

"Well, tell Mr. Goddard that I am quite recovered and that I expect to have him call on me today. Be sure to tell him that I must see him at once. He must give up every other engagement to come to me. Now, do you understand? Can you put it so he can't say no?"

"I can, ma'am, and I'll venture to give you my word of honor that he will be here before the sun sets."

"Go, then, and prove your words."

As I left her presence I felt that my mission had been one of mercy that morning, for I had, apparently unconsciously, been the means of lifting a burden temporarily from one heavy heart. I knew also that I carried a message that would bring a ray of sunlight into the life of another.

I might have stretched the importance of this interview to my master or I might have given him the literal truth. I know not which now. However, I delivered the message. It was sufficient to make him obey it.

The result of their meeting was manifest at once. Both of them appeared happy and normal again, and the old relationship seemed to be re-established. How much Miss Stetson explained to him about her fears and knowledge of his case I never knew, but for a time at least she was determined to put down all feelings of aversion for my master because of her knowledge that he was a doomed leper. Or perhaps—like another self sacrificing virgin that I have read about—she had decided to consecrate her life to him, to live by him and nurse him through the coming years of pain and suffering and mental agony which must ever be the lot of a leper.

CHAPTER XIII.

I HAD now been in my position about six months. The interesting events which I have recorded had kept me from any longing to return to the exciting experiences of my profession. During this time I had grown somewhat stouter, and my countenance had begun to assume a kindly, benevolent, well fed appearance. Necessarily I had grown a trifle lazier. Several times I had almost decided to return to my old methods of life, but a certain inertia, undoubtedly bred and nourished by my new existence of ease, always prevented. I would keep deferring the time until a more convenient period.

A genuine fear that I would lose my skill through lack of practice occasionally tormented me, but each time I put it aside with the thought that my profession was no longer an absolute necessity. It did not mean bread and butter to me as it did at one time. I was a full fledged butler, and I could secure a good recommendation from my master any time I chose to leave.

Warned by my own experiences, I never let an opportunity pass to help a young man just starting on the downward road to get back to the main highway. I never entertained any serious thoughts of getting back there myself, but I hate to see others straying from it.

Nevertheless I now found myself slowly drifting back to an honest life. This had been accomplished through no choosing of my own. Circumstances again were responsible for this change. I did not make any resolves to remain thus for any length of time—in fact, I rather expected that the time would be brief.

As I just remarked, I never liked to see another, especially a young man, taking the downward road, and it was this strange feeling that gave me a little worry and anxiety in my idle life as butler for Mr. Goddard. I realized that my master was leading a double life; that he was pursuing his burglary tendencies systematically and that he was committing crime even while he was making love to Miss Stetson. This circumstance at first puzzled me; then it worried and irritated and finally disgusted me. I could not fathom its meaning. I saw my own crime, illustrated in him, in its true light, and it positively made me ashamed of my record. I longed to speak of the matter to him, but our peculiar relationship prevented it.

While I sympathized with him for the incurable disease which had always cast a blight over his young life, I soon learned to condemn him for his rash folly. No man of his position, intelligence and opportunities in the world had any business to stoop to crime. In some cases necessity may drive a man to the commission of a theft and habit may later deaden his conscience, but no such excuse could be held out for my master.

He was either bad at heart, a criminal by instinct, or he had a weak will that had been perverted by others when young and unformed. In everything else he seemed a model of strength, self command and intelligence. Why should he be so helpless in this respect?

Since that first memorable meeting at the dead of night in the Stetson mansion no word or sign had ever passed between us which indicated that we knew anything of the other's criminal tendencies. Out of a sense of honor I kept my part of the agreement, and for some reason he remained uncommunicative about the subject. Nevertheless I longed to break the ice between us. If I could once more meet him when robbing a house, I would have the liberty to speak, and I would not again bind myself to silence.

Admiration for his skill, love for him as a man when not engaged in his professional work and a certain disgust at his deceptive, double existence produced strangely conflicting emotions in me. At times I felt that his crime should be atoned for and that if he should ever attempt to marry Miss Stetson I would reveal all I knew to her. Gradually his moral disease seemed more terrible to me than his physical. As a leper he was suffering for the sins of another, but as a criminal he was pursuing dangers and pleasures of his own free will which in time would entail suffering upon others.

A wave of moral reform swept over me for a time and possessed me so completely that I decided to make amends for my past deeds by trying to convert my master from his evil ways. If I could accomplish this, I should feel that my life had not been spent in vain.

Meanwhile I lived in the fear that he would be discovered. I knew from the reports that somebody was conducting a systematic series of burglaries in the neighborhood, and I did not hesitate to attach the blame to my master. Detectives were constantly prowling around at night to capture the robbers, but all their skill seemed to be without avail. A better testimony to the ability of my master could not be given.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN I reached the conclusion that something ought to be done to save Mr. Goddard from himself, I began planning the best course to pursue. First I would have to meet him at night under circumstances similar to our first meeting, and then I would have the liberty to speak to him. To accomplish this I watched him every night, often sitting up until nearly daybreak to see if he left the house. For nearly a week I followed this course, and I could swear that he had not left his bed after midnight.

On the seventh night he had an agreement to meet Dr. Squires at his office, and, feeling worn out with my unsuccessful vigils, I retired early and enjoyed a sound night's sleep.

That night a big robbery was committed not five miles from the house, and the following morning everybody was talking about it. When I heard the news, a terrible suspicion seized me. My master was using his alleged appointments with the doctor as a means to throw me off the track. I tried to trace back the dates of the various robberies, and I imagined that I could establish a coincidence between them and Mr. Goddard's visits to Dr. Squires.

All that day my master was indolent and worn out, as usual, and I instantly attributed it now to his work of the preceding night and not to any poison which the doctor was administering to him.

When this light dawned clearly upon my mind, I knew exactly what to do. I slept soundly and peacefully during the next few nights, but about ten days later when my master announced that he had another appointment with Dr. Squires I prepared to spend the night following him.

He left the house about 8 o'clock. To my surprise, he did not take his horse, but walked leisurely down the road toward the old haunted mansion that the doctor had so long occupied. I followed him at a respectful distance, but he did not seem nervous or at all suspicious. He walked carelessly along, without once looking behind him.

He reached his destination about half past 8 and walked lightly up toward the house and entered. This did not astonish me, for I supposed that he really did go to the doctor's and probably submitted to some sort of treatment. His midnight marauding would begin after he left to go home.

I cautiously approached the house and tried to get a glimpse of the interior, but the blinds and shades were so closely drawn that I failed to get a glimpse of even the light. I contented myself with examining the burglar alarm, for at some future time I might find it useful to unfasten it from a window without giving an alarm.

The minutes passed slowly. Not a sound or movement from inside could be heard. Accustomed to waiting in patience for a long time, I did not find my vigil so difficult. I entertained myself in various ways to keep from falling asleep. A few moments of sleep might spoil everything for me.

It must have been shortly after midnight when I heard the front door creak on its hinges. I was concealed behind some shrubbery at the time, where I could command a good view of the entrance to the house. The door, I knew, was opening, but no ray of light streamed through the crack. The whole house was, in fact, wrapped in darkness.

I saw the shadows of two men on the front porch, and by their general outlines I knew that one was my master and the other Dr. Squires. Neither spoke for some time. Then I heard the doctor say in a low, muffled voice:

"Now, Charles, the house is three miles below, and you ought to reach it in half an hour."

"Yes; I'll reach it in half an hour."

"You must be extra cautious, for there are many detectives around," the doctor continued.

"I shall be very careful."

"Then go and return as soon as possible."

They separated. The doctor stole noiselessly back into the house and my master walked stealthily down the gravelly drive toward the main highway.

His manner had completely changed. Every movement he made indicated suspicion and alertness. He was not nervous, but every faculty was strained. He was now the professional burglar on the scent. The slight breaking of a twig or the clinking of a pebble, I knew, would arouse and alarm him.

My prey was not an easy one to follow. He would stop and turn upon his tracks in the most unexpected way. His ears and eyes appeared gifted with wonderful powers of sensation. I had to increase the distance between us to avoid detection.

I managed to keep him in sight for about a mile, and then he suddenly gave me the slip. In some inexplicable manner he had dodged away from me and disappeared as completely as if the earth had swallowed him. Chagrined at thus being thrown off the track, I put all my energies at work to regain the lost trail. For two hours I wandered around, vainly trying to catch a glimpse of the man. I became so reckless that I would have exposed my person to him if it would have discovered his whereabouts to me.

Finally I gave it up in disgust. I seated myself under a tree near the highway and reflected. Certainly I was baffled for the night. I was on the point of returning home when the words of Dr. Squires recurred to me. The two were evidently engaged in the same criminal practices, and they would probably meet again that night somewhere.

With this thought uppermost in my mind I cautiously retraced my steps to the doctor's house. Once I thought that I had discovered my master again by accident, but upon closer observation I found that I was on the very point of accosting a detective. An arrest at such a time of the night might lead to unpleasant complications, and so I remained half an hour hidden in the bushes until the man had disappeared.

When I reached the old mansion, everything was as dark and gloomy as when I left it to follow my master. There was not the sign of a living being around. I cautiously started to walk up the gravelly drive, and the crunching noise of my boots sounded clear and distinct on the night air. I just had time to drop down behind some shrubbery before the front door of the house opened, and the dark shadow of a man seemed to flit out of it. I remained perfectly quiet, not daring to move or scarcely breathe. Undoubtedly the noise made by my boots had attracted the attention of somebody in the mansion.

I remained in this reclining position for a full half hour. The shadow on the porch remained so perfectly still that I half imagined that it was an illusion or the reflection of some intervening object. But my policy has ever been to make sure of a thing before deciding what course to pursue, and so I accepted the benefit of the doubt and waited patiently. Once or twice I thought of the tales of spirits and ghosts related about the old mansion and of how they walked through the empty rooms after midnight and made free with all earthly occupants. This did not disturb me, however, for I knew that somebody besides spirits was awake around the house that night.

I was getting tired of watching that immovable figure on the porch, and my eyelids were winking and blinking spasmodically when my ears caught a sound directly back of me. I did not dare move my head an inch, but the thought of the bloodthirsty Danes suddenly made me cold and clammy. I imagined I detected the patter of their feet on the drive, and I gripped my revolver tightly, determined to make a desperate stand for my life.

A moment later my feelings were considerably relieved. The steps approached nearer and nearer—soft, stealthy, delicate steps that might have been made by a child. Then the figure of a man loomed up within three yards of me and moved swiftly toward the house.

But in that momentary glimpse I caught the features of my master. In his hands he carried a clumsy bundle or article, which I failed to make out. Then for the first time the shadow on the porch moved. The two met at the top of the steps and quickly disappeared in the house, the door closing noiselessly behind them.

I would have given much just then to have had the power to penetrate behind those wooden walls or to have raised the shades and looked into the doctor's office, where I knew that a light must be burning. But I felt that my quest was ended for the night and that further work would be useless. After waiting around another half hour I quietly stole out of the yard and hurried home to reflect over the strange occurrences of the night.

TO BE CONTINUED.

NOT ALWAYS DAMAGED.

The Goods That Are Known In Trade Circles as "Seconds."

"It does not follow," said the buyer for one of the sections of one of Washington's big department stores, "that goods which are known to the public and to the trade, and especially to lady shoppers, as 'seconds' are damaged goods.

"Goods of all classes are known to the trade under three great subdivisions—the absolutely perfect, the seconds and the short ends—and their importance and value are regulated accordingly.

"The manufacturers of goods of all descriptions, from a locomotive to a spool of thread, do not try to dispose of their products as perfect unless they really are such, however light the consciences of some retail dealers may be on this point. Woolens and cottons at the mills and all goods sold by the yard and down to bicycle tires are carefully inspected for flaws and defects of the minutest description. Such as are not up to the standard of merit placed thereon by the house turning them out are laid aside by the experts and classed as seconds. These are disposed of to the trade under this name and at a greatly reduced price as compared with the perfectly made article.

"For instance, let us take the case of men's collars, and especially the high turnover collar. After being laundered they are examined for defects, the most prominent of which is a slight break in the linen on top in front where they button. It may be scarcely perceptible, but it is enough to cause it to be thrown aside, and the name of the maker is not stamped thereon, as would be the case if it were perfect. Very often one of the buttonholes is slightly torn or there is a little scratch in the linen on the outer side. Some firms sell thousands of dozens of these collars a year at a very low price, while some of the defects are not perceptible to the eye of the purchaser, who buys the goods at retail at less than half the cost of the perfect article. The same is true with bicycle tires, the makers cutting their names off the rubber. Dealers are careful not to have their names go on seconds, as the public would judge their perfect articles by the imperfect, relying upon the name of the manufacturer to buy a perfect article.

"In weaving yarn goods a broken thread or a loose pin or a few drops of oil from the loom will make half a dozen or more yards imperfect, yet salable as short ends. These are cut off from the bolt and sold cheap to dealers who make a specialty of handling such goods. Some mills will have at the end of the season thousands of these short ends. The retail buyers and jobbers secure them at low prices, the public very often supposing that they are getting 'bargains' in the perfect goods at less than known market rates. Usually they receive full value for their money.

"The loss to the manufacturers and the mills from seconds and short ends makes a big hole in the profits at the end of the season, and this loss is taken into consideration in the wholesale price asked for the perfect goods. In some mills they have a system of making the operatives pay for any difference in the damaged goods where the loss may be traced to their personal fault and not that of the machine. This system makes the operatives very careful, as it materially affects their wages. If a manufacturer attempted to put on the market seconds for perfect goods, the retail dealers would not buy from him, and the public would likewise withdraw its patronage."—Washington Star.

MAJOR SAVED HIMSELF.

"Yes," said the major, "it was at the seashore, the tide was low, and, although the turtle weighed nearly a ton, I turned him over."

Also then, as the crowd groaned, the major added "to the authorities."—Atlanta Constitution.